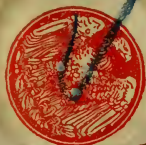


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Reveries and Rhymes

Francesca Falk Miller.



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1915

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Reveries
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Rhymes

Francesca Falk Miller.



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Twelve of these poems have appeared under the name of Francesca Miller Rensing in the following Texas papers:

San Antonio Express, Waco Times Herald, Fort Worth Record.

APR 16 1915

LOVE'S EPITOME.

Her First Kiss.

She kissed me!
Like petals falling from a rose,
So soft;
Like summer fields where sunshine glows,
So warm;
Like poppies, nodding in repose,
So light.
Life still runs on with throbbing veins,
But always one sweet thought remains—
She kissed me!

Rest.

"Deus haec otia fecit." God hath made this
a rest.

Since first I met Thee, life has been
A melody with one refrain.
Contentment; with thine arms about;
Peace, that I could not live without;
Dear one, 'tis only thus expressed—
"God hath made this a rest."

To find, to love, to have, to hold,
Life could not pay me brighter gold.
This tenderness and truth which lies
Within the love-light of thine eyes!
I bow my head upon thy breast—
"God hath made this a rest."

Requiem.

My Love lies dead. The withered leaves
Fall silently from dying trees
Upon her grave; her new-made bed.
Yet not alone she sleepeth there,
For hushed upon her breast so fair,
My heart lies dead!

ENDURANCE.

To suffer is the test of Birth,
Of Rank, of quality.
Who bears in silence and alone,
A "thoroughbred" is he!
Endurance is the mark of kings!
To silence they revert,
He only is low-born, indeed,
Who needs cry out when hurt!

I THANK THEE, LORD!

I thank Thee, Lord, for every pain I suffer here;
I thank Thee that a smile may show
 Beneath the tear.
From every fall—there's need to rise!
In every grief—a lesson lies!

I thank Thee, Lord, for every sin
 Half-overcome;
I thank Thee, Lord, for every race
 But partly won.
For every loss—shows me the Prize!
And every Hell—PROVES Paradise!

CHARITY.

A beggar lay on the city street,
With a crippled back, and a cup at his feet;
"God's pity," he cries to the passerby,
But he sees Life better than you or I!

.
A woman, robed in furs of brown,
From her limousine was stepping down;
Her fair face hardened, her eyes grew cold,
As she passed the beggar who needed gold.
"Tis a careless city; an ill-kept street,
That allows such vermin under my feet!
Encouraging loafers, fostering crime;
I'll speak to the mayor, when I have time!"

Another woman beside her stood,
Who had tasted evil and knew not good;
From her draggled hat to her shabby feet
She was lab'led a woman from off the street.
She gazed at the beggar with knowing look,
And out of her purse some pennies took.
"My money is earned from the gutter, too,
But that doesn't matter to me or you."

.
A beggar lay on the city street,
With a crippled back, and a cup at his feet;
"God's pity," he cries to the passerby,
But he knows Life better than you or I!

MY BABY.

Little specks of blue,
Some folks call 'em eyes,
Mother knows they're simply
Pieces from the skies.

Little streaks of red,
Some folks call 'em lips,
Mother knows the scraps fell off
Where the sunset dips.

Little wisps of gold,
Some folks call it hair,
Mother knows a sunbeam
Caught, and melted there.

THE LAND OF MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

There's a beautiful land of Might Have Been
Which lies by the river of Past,
Where dwell the shadows of Other Days,
And the Dreams that cannot last.
The violets grow beneath the grass,
And the heather over the fen,
But the violets wither, the heath grows brown,
In the land of Might Have Been.

We all have sailed to this distant land
Down the long, swift river of Past,
And we've taken our dreams and our longings
there,
And built us a stronghold vast,
Wherein we treasure each smile,—each sigh,—
Each hope,—each kiss,—and then—
We silently bar the heavy gates
To the land of Might Have Been.

And silently still, though our eyes are wet,
And our hearts are numb with pain,
We turn our steps in the paths of Fate
Back to our lives again—
Back to the land of That Which Is,
Forgetting—if we can,
Oh, God—could we only keep our thoughts
From that land of Might Have Been!

MY LOVER AND MY FRIEND.

My Lover reveled in my smile—
As roses in the sun,
And staid contented at my side
While life was sweet and young.
But when a shadow crossed my face,
And pain and sorrow met,
My Lover turned and left me then—
For lovers soon forget!

My Friend, whom I ne'er smiled upon,
Nor welcomed in my heart,
Had never left me, but kept watch—
A little way apart.
And when he saw my loneliness,
He came and shared my pain,
For lovers run at fleeting smiles—
But friends, true friends, remain!

INTO THE NIGHT.

I.

Betrothal.

Do you ever think, my sister,
As you lean on your lover's breast,
And feel his strong arms, and listen
To his promise of love and rest,
That somewhere out in the wide world,
Beats a heart that is young, like yours,
That has had its hope and its longing,
Its dreaming of pleasure pure.
But that now is stricken with sorrow,
All hope and contentment dismissed,
And the lips that now are drooping
Are the lips that once were kissed.
So when your heart is rejoicing
And the world seems wond'rous and bright
Breathe a prayer for that other sister—
Who is drifting out—into the night.

II.

Marriage.

Did you pause to think, my sister,
As you stood by your husband's side,
On the rose-covered steps of the altar,
A trusting and earnest bride,
That somewhere out in the wide-world
Was another woman,—like you,—
Who would never know the beauty
Of a love that proved deathless and true!
Whose life had been wrecked and forsaken,
Who had never been loved—as a wife,
But whose days would be always clouded—
A hopeless and lonely life!
So before you leave the Altar
For the world beyond so bright,
Breathe a prayer for that other sister,
Who has drifted out—into the night.

III.

Motherhood.

Do you ever think, my sister?
As you kneel by your children's bed,
And stoop to kiss the eyelids,
Or stroke the curly head,
That somewhere out in the wide-world
Is another woman like you,
Who has known the joys of a mother
And the love and devotion, too;
But who now is sitting in silence
By the side of an empty bed,
And the mother-heart is breaking
For the sight of a curly head.
Oh, kneel by your children's bedside,
Where your future beckons bright,
And breathe a prayer for that sister
Who's a mother no more tonight.

IV.

Life's End.

Do you pause to think, my sister,
As your life is nearing its close—
And the promise of Heaven is dawning
Where the sunset color glows,
That somewhere out in the wide-world,
Is another heart nearing its end;
With no children, no dear ones around her,
And often no home, and no friend!
A woman whose life has been empty,
Or darkened by sin or by woe,
And now who is hearing the summons—
But is blindly afraid to go!
Oh, pause on the threshold of Heaven
Where your soul is awaiting the light,—
And pray to your God for that sister,
Who is going out—into the night.

ONE MOONLIGHT NIGHT.

A moonbeam stooped and kissed me
As I stood 'neath her silver rays,
 But my heart was chill,
 And my soul was still,
In the flood-light of her gaze.

My lover stooped and kissed me
As I stood 'neath the April skies,
 And my heart throbs spoke,
 And my soul awoke,
In the lovelight of his eyes!

A MIRACLE.

My eyes were blind—
Before the healing touch
Of Christ's own pierced hand!
I could not see—
Save in my narrow way.
I did not understand.

But now I see—
Each lesson in a flower,
Each truth in springing grain.
I see the soul—
In every neighbor's face;
I see the good—in pain!

My eyes were blind—
Before the gentle words
Of Christ's own voice divine!
"Believe and see!"
(But not of narrowness,
The sight He gave as mine.)

Yes, now I see—
Each sorrow to relieve;
Each burden to make light.
I see but "good"—
Since Christ restored to me
The Miracle of Sight!

MY MOTHER.

(Written and published "Mother's Day," May, 1913, for my Mother, Mrs. Louis Falk, as a token of love and gratitude for her lifelong devotion.)

Into her arms they laid me, newly born,
And those who stood beside her said she smiled
With that same holy smile that angels wear;
She loved me from my birth—her little child!
Forgotten were her hours of agony;
Forgiven, Life, for every cruel pain!
"She smiled"—and drew her baby close,
And there a Mother-love was born again.

All through my childhood—ah, what happy
hours!

I knew no care—She made Life one sweet
song;

If tears were shed, her kisses healed the wound,
If laughter reigned, she helped the joy along.
From infancy, while nursing at her breast,

To schooldays—earnest, studious hours—
She loved and guarded, cherished and adored;
Madonna, Mother! Keeper of God's Flowers.

To womanhood I came with untouched, untried
heart

And mind, to walk Life's Journey, long,
Still with a knowledge that my Mother gave—
A knowledge that would keep her child from
wrong.

All that I was, to her sweet Love I owed,
Of Life's gifts she had given me her share,
And when she placed me at the World's wide
door

I could command the best, and meet it there!

Then, with the seeming cruelty of youth,
I met—and loved—nay, even left Her side
For him who called!—Oh, Happy thoughtless-
ness—

I left my Mother to become his bride.
And she, brave heart, with her own gentle
hands

Arrayed me for that sunny wedding day,
Hiding the tears, the bitter loneliness,
Until, from sight, she watched us drive away.

REVERIES AND RHYMES

My bridal home, so sweet, so bright, so pure,
Which, e'er I came, she decked with sweet-
est flowers,

And waiting, welcomed me to my domain
Where I would spend long, busy, happy hours.
Then, while we waved "good-bye," she went
back "home"

To spend the night in fondling some small toy
That would remind her of her Baby Girl,
Forgetting her own loss in my new joy.

And when in weak'ning pain I journey'd far
On that long road which women tread alone—
To Heaven's Gate—to find the little soul

And bring it back, my little child, My Own!
In those long hours, while fighting Death for
Life,

She came, and kneeling, took my trembling
hands,

And having journeyed that same way herself,
She whispered, "Dear, your mother under-
stands!"

And now the years have brought their work and
care,

Both joy and grief, the Sunshine and the Rain.
But through it all the one heart never failed—

My Mother shared my every Joy and Pain!
Back to her arms now, many times I come

As in my careless, far-off childish days,
Knowing she keeps me ever in her thoughts,
Knowing she loves me ever when she prays!

And should the Dear God, when he bids her
"come"

To that Fair Other Home beyond my sight,
Remember me with pity, let Him then

Give me her "Spirit-love" to cheer my night.
Oh Christ, who knew a Mother upon Earth—
And knew what Love a Mother's heart may
give,—

Send me the "nearness" of my Mother's soul,
To guide, protect and bless me while I live!

BIG (?) SINS AND LITTLE (?) SINS.

You rail at the theatre, the stage, the show;
Is your temper sweet and your anger slow?

You storm at the dance or at music gay;
Do you smile on your household each new day?

You condemn all cards as a gambler's game;
Do you gossip about a woman's name?

You judge your neighbor's religion, too;
Is your charity broad; is your worship true?

You scorn the sinner and drunkard low;
Did you lend them a hand, or give them a show?

The Dance, the Play, the Game soon are past,
But the Love you create is the thing that will
last!

FORGIVE US OUR SINS.

I could not sin the petty sins
Of greed or spite or gain,
Nor soil my life with jealousies,
Nor wish another pain!

But when my sins confront me here
I know that while I live
There could not be more greater sins—
And so—forgive! Forgive!

I could not take my neighbor's hand
And treat that neighbor mean,
Nor strike a child, nor kick a dog,
Nor lie, to harm unseen!

But when I sin, the very depths
Of hell no more could give!
A soul will need to pay the cost—
And so—forgive. Forgive!

LOVE.

'Tis not the perfume of the rose,
'Tis not the jewel's gleam,
Nor ripples on the summer sea
Where lovers sit and dream.
'Tis not the springtime's bud and breeze
Nor winter's fireside glow,
'Tis just the "Peace of God on Earth"—
Dear heart, because I know.

REFLECTION.

In dark and muddy pools that lie
 Along the winding way,
Look for the stars reflected there—
 You'll find each tiny ray.
Absorb the cheery, happy light,
 Sent from the skies above,
Forget the sullen waters black,
 And see—reflected Love!

In cloudy sky, in threat'ning storm,
 That darken earth's fair face,
When 'cross the grey map of the clouds
 Is spun the lightning's lace,
Look for the welcome, pattering rain—
 Forget the storm above—
Watch how the flowers lift up their heads,
 And see—reflected Love!

In each man's soul, in each man's face,
 Where scars of life are lined,
And sin or failure, want or woe,
 Is all you seem to find,
Look for the tiny spark of good,
 Let charity be broad,
Forget the sins, the scars, the wrongs,
 And see—reflected God!

REVERIES AND RHYMES

APPLE BLOSSOMS.

I saw her first among the pink and white
Of Apple-blossoms,—falling at her feet—
From ghostly branches. And in that Spring light
She looked herself a blossom, young and
sweet.

And then from out the rosy, scented air,
I heard the silvery music of her voice—
Laughing as petals fell upon her hair—
And knew my heart at last had made its
choice!

A FANCY.

Pale moonlight glistening on the snow;
Or shady banks where rivers flow;
The early violet, dew-pearled;
 The hum of bee;
 The summer sea;
How God must love the world!

The clasp of hand in trouble's hour;
The open petals of a flower;
A baby's hair—soft, downy, curled;
 The shadows long;
 A robin's song;
How God must love the world!

REVERIES AND RHYMES

LULLABY.

Starlight
Far-light
Into the window shine.
Dream light
Beam light
Soft on this babe of mine.
What are her mother's eyes?
Visions of dreamland skies
Whereto my darling flies—
Drifting away.

Wind blow—
Fire glow
Shadows are hovering near.
Sing low
"By-lo!"
Baby has naught to fear.
What is her mother's arm?
Cradle and pillow warm,
Where she is safe from harm—
Rocking away.

My Sweet
Dream sweet.
Morning will soon be here.
Hours fleet
Sleep sweet
Playtime is drawing near.
What is her mother's breast?
Haven of love and rest.
All that her soul holds best—
Sleeping away.

?

A glaring sun: a blinding rain:
The reek of sin: the grip of pain:
Regret; endurance; struggle: strife.
And is this Life?

A purple sky: a silence deep:
A last, long, restful, dreamless sleep.
A smile of peace: one soft, tired breath.
And is this Death?

LIFE'S LESSON.

The hardest lesson, my earnest friend,
That you'll need to learn, 'fore your journeys
end;

Is not to suffer in silence grim,
Nor work till you're tired in brain and limb,

But the lesson is this—
To wait!

You laugh? Quite so, my doubting friend,
But the truth is the truth—"to the bitter end."
When you've captured patience you've cheated
"fate"

And when you have learned to wait—and wait,
You will have learned—
To live!

THE TRAIL.

Did you ever see in the western land
A narrow, winding "trail,"
And found that life and safety lay
In that path so steep and frail?
Over the rocks, down the hill,
Past cañons rugged side,
It leads you surely, safely on—
To the plains of the safe "divide."

So, often, seems our path in life.
Like a trail on the Western way.
The winding road is bound about
By sorrow and pain each day,
The dangerous rocks of the cañon yawn
As our path winds up its side,
But place your faith in the narrow trail—
For it leads to the "Great Divide!"

GREATNESS.

They say to suffer brings the greatest gain.
They say the Great become thus great thro'
 pain.
'Tis truth! A wondrous doctrine! But yet—
 wait;
Remember all who suffer are not Great!

MY SHIP.

My life is like a ship, the wide, blue sea
Is but the World—so measureless and vast.
The waves sometimes are high,—they cover
me,—
And oft I think my hope and peace are passed.

I see the other boats astride the waves,
Their sails are white, their cargo fresh and
fair.
Again I see the wrecks of sinful lives
Adrift against the black rocks of despair.

Sometimes the sea is blue and calm with peace,
No storm-waves beat against my firm boat's
side,
And straight before me lies the Harbor safe
Toward which, all the many vessels ride.

But though our lives are happier in the calm,
And sweet the day—and deep with peace the
night,
We make but little headway t'wards the port,
From which streams forth the welcome morn-
ing light.

For 'tis not calm and balmy seas of blue,
That make our wilful ship of life sail fast
And ride triumphant into sheltering Port—
'Tis God's own storms that drive us home at
last.

THE WIFE.

I loved him so—I let him go!
 He did not know my sacrifice,
 And did not need the love I prize,
The wealth of heart I could bestow.

He smiled—and pitied e'en my woe,
 Then tried to comfort me the more—
 But chafed beneath the yoke he wore,
And so—and so—I let him go!

DEAR EYES.

Dear merry eyes,
Dear shining eyes,
Where do you look today?
"Upon a world I wish to know;
This life of work and play.
For youth is joy,—the path is there,
And I must learn my way."
Dear merry eyes,
Dear shining eyes,
Be careful where you stray!

Dear saddened eyes,
Dear tear-stained eyes,
Where do you look today?
"Upon the world I wished to know,
The world I thought was gay.
For youth believes in life and joy:
Soon turn the bright skies grey,"
Dear saddened eyes,
Dear tear-stained eyes,
'Tis ever thus we pay!

Dear tender eyes,
Dear loving eyes,
Where do you look today?
"Upon the world—her children there—
The need to work and pray!
To suffer much; to help; to guide;
To fight with life each day!"
Dear tender eyes,
Dear loving eyes,
T'ward Heaven lies your way!

DINNA YE KEN?

'Tis time I gang to work, lass,
I canna dream a' day.
There's cuttin' down o' grain, lass,
There's reapin' o' the hay.
But through the live-lang hours, lass,
Ye might think oft' o' Ben.
Who loves ye bonny well, lass,
Darling—dinna ye ken?

'Tis time I gang to sleep, lass,
I canna think a' night,
The whippoorwill is callin' me
To snuff my candle light!
But soon will come the dawn, lass,
I'll dream o' ye till then.
For I love ye bonny well, lass.
Darling—Dinna ye ken?

BRAVERY.

There is no need for braver deeds,
Than those performed each day,
To conquer fear, to capture joy,
To watch, to fight, to pray.
To meet each loss with some new gain,
Each pain with some fair smile,
We'll earn a brave soul's recompense—
For courage that's "worth while!"

As when the diver, braving death,
Dives deep beneath the foam,
So we, from out life's troubled wave
May bring our treasures home.
To meet our enemy with love—
To close our eyes to sin—
Forgiving as our Christ forgave—
Brave! Steadfast! We will win!

IS IT WORTH YOUR WHILE?

Is it worth your while, my sister,
To send forth a cruel word
That will mar or stain,
Another's name,
Where'er it is spoken or heard?
To bring the tears to a woman's eyes,
To see her tremble with fear,
Is it worth your while
To turn her smile
To a sigh or a bitter tear?

It is worth your while, my brother,
To crowd a man to the wall?
To strive to gain
By another's pain,
Or to see a neighbor fall?
To watch the drift and wreckage
Of another man's lonely soul,—
It is worth your while
To kill his smile,
And win for yourself the goal?

I PLANTED ME A GARDEN.

I planted me a garden—

In the Spring.

And in the warm sweet earth

Seeds sprang in flower-birth.

Ah, Life was mirth, all mirth—

In the Spring.

I gather'd from my garden

In my Youth.

First early lilies white,

Pure dreams of love and light,—

Ah, Life was bright, so bright—

In my Youth.

I cut me crimson roses

Later on.

Each one a heart-throb mad,

Knowledge of all earth had.

Ah, Life was glad, all glad—

Later on.

I pulled the quiet myrtle

After that.

For sorrow came with years,

Dead hopes; dim faith; and fears.

Ah, Life was tears,—all tears—

After that.

Dismantled lay my garden

In the Fall.

But when the tumults cease,

I'll plant the brave Heartsease!

For life is peace,—all peace—

In the Fall.

GOOD-BYE.

Every country has its own
Farewell cry,
You and I—
Simply say a-down the years
Words that tremble thro' the tears,
"Dearest Heart—
Good-bye!"

Where the sun-kissed fields of France
Lie in dew,
Sky of blue;
Dusky hair and witching way;
Shrug of shoulder; parting gay.
"Au revoir—
Adieu!"

In the hills of sunny Spain
Ever thus,
Dear to us,
Castinet and tambourine,
Lacy veils or satin sheen,
Cry to us—
"Adios!"

On Italia's vine-clad shores
Flowers blow;
Rivers flow.
'Neath the olive branches' shade
Lovers' parting serenade.
"A rivederci,—
Addio!"

In the northern German land
Homefolks reign,
Noble strain,
Quiet, they—of sober mind,
Speak their parting gracious, kind.
So—"Auf—
—Wiedersehen!"

Every country has its own
Farewell cry;
It's "good-bye."
But our own more precious seems,
"God be with you," dear, it means.
With a sigh—
And—"Good-bye."



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